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News Release

For Immediate Release

Two weekend fires blamed on careless smoking

The Springfield Fire Department is warning residents who smoke to use extra caution, following two close calls over the weekend. The first fire on Sunday started in an apartment complex on Ingram Mill Rd. when a cigarette caught a cigarette butt receptacle on fire. The fire spread to the exterior wall causing minor damage to the apartment building. While the cigarette butt receptacle used is generally a good way to dispose of cigarettes, this one had not been emptied recently, allowing the cigarette butt to smolder and eventually catch the other cigarette butts and the receptacle on fire. There were no injuries.

The second fire occurred early Tuesday morning in a single-family residence on E. McClernon. A resident of the home had been using a ceramic container with potting soil to dispose of cigarettes. The contents of the container caught on fire and spread to the exterior of the house and into the attic. The fire caused moderate damage to the home. There were no injuries. The Springfield Fire Department reminds all smokers that potting soil is not a safe way to dispose of cigarettes since it contains combustible materials.

In both incidents, the fire would have been minimized if the cigarette butts were emptied on a more frequent basis and if the containers were kept further from the building. All cigarette dispensers would be at least 3 feet from anything that can burn, including the side of a building. Other tips include:

- Use a sturdy ashtray or can filled with sand to collect ashes. Do not use a flammable container such as Tupperware and never use a potted plant. Potting soil contains combustible materials.
 - Ashtrays should be set on something sturdy and hard to ignite, like a table.
 - Put it out. The cigarette really needs to be completely stubbed out in the ashtray.
 - Do not let cigarette butts pile up on top of one another. Empty your ashtray often by first soaking the cigarette butts in water. NEVER toss hot cigarette butts or ashes in the trash.
 - If you are drowsy, put it out. Fires caused by cigarettes often start on or next to the victim – in bed, on a sofa or in the trash.
- Check to make sure your smoke alarms are in good working order.

Remember, if you smoke, put it out. All the way. Every time.

For media only: For more information, contact Fire and Life Safety Educator Cara Erwin at (417) 864-1699 or cerwin@springfieldmo.gov. You can also [view our public service announcement on careless smoking](#).